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This study provides a description of the 20th-century literary criticism associated with the epistolary form in English literature arrived at by bibliometric descriptive analysis. Information gathered from eight different indexes for the period 1900-1991 helps describe the specific features of: authors, titles, format, language, country of publication, year of publication, specific topics related to the form, and subject headings. Suggestions are made as to the applicability of descriptive studies to collection development, augmenting standard bibliographies, and how descriptive studies may further the knowledge of those working with specific materials in the humanities. Three tables and six figures of data are included; the form used to record the bibliographic information is attached. Contains 22 references. (Author/RS)

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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism of the Epistolary Form in English Literature: A Bibliometric Analysis

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the Kent State University School of Library and Information Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Library Science

by

Priscilla A. Thomas

May, 1993

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Abstract

This study provides a description of the twentieth-century literary criticism associated with the epistolary form in English literature arrived at by bibliometric descriptive analysis. Information gathered from eight different indexes for the period of 1900 - 1991 help describe the specific features of: authors, titles, format, language, country of publication, year of publication, specific topics related to the form, and subject headings. Suggestions are made as to the applicability of descriptive studies to collection development, augmenting standard bibliographies, and how descriptive studies may further the knowledge of those working with specific materials in the humanities.

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Preface

A project that began quite simply as "something I'm interested in" was honed to the product offered here in the hopes that it will be of some contribution. My appreciation goes to Dr. Mary Kim for her expertise in bibliometrics and her patience and help in the "honing" process. Thanks are also due to my fellow students who expressed an interest in having me describe my study, thereby helping me think about it even moreso.

Lastly, to Bob....words could never be enough.

INTRODUCTION

The use of the epistolary form in literature dates from antiquity to the present day. The purposes of the literary epistle have ranged from the biographical to the fictional. Evolution of the literary form began with a single letter written to convey a singular message. Later, it was extended to relating history as well as philosophical opinions. Since 1740 when Samuel Richardson wrote Pamela, the fictional form has generally been recognized as a series of letters that relate a story. Variations of the form exist in the number of letters written, which may be one, a few, or scores, and in the number of characters writing the letters. Epistolary works have enjoyed a consistent, but somewhat erratic, popularity since ancient times. Its most prolific era in both productivity and readership was the late eighteenth century (Black 1940, 174). Since then, and until now in the late twentieth-century, the most common epistolary form has been that of the novel. The form has endured, perhaps, because of the appeal it has for authors who wish to experiment with relating their narrative from a unique point of view or multiple points of view and establishing verisimilitude. Other examples besides Richardson's two novels, Pamela (1740) and Clarissa (1748), are Henry Fielding's Shamela (1741), Tobias Smollett's The Expedition of Humphry Clinker (1771), and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus (1818). Notable

examples of epistolary novels of the twentieth-century are John Barth's Letters (1979) and Alice Walker's The Color Purple (1982).

For literary researchers and librarian/bibliographers working in this subject specific area, questions about this literature abound. Since the epistolary form is such an old literary device, what do we know of its specific history? What sources exist to aid the contemporary scholar? What do we know of the literary criticism written pertaining to the epistolary form? Is there an existing bibliography of the criticism? It has already been stated that the primary works themselves have enjoyed great popularity over centuries, but how long have literary critics written about the form? Has the criticism increased over time, or has it diminished in production just as the primary works have? Or, instead, has there been a consistency of interest in the subject?

The impetus for the study conducted here was the disappointing discovery that there is a tremendous lack of bibliographic control in the area of twentieth-century critical literature related to the epistolary form. Thus, the initial interest was to contribute first a bibliography of twentieth-century criticism of the epistolary form in English literature and, beyond that, supply a bibliography of primary epistolary works that will fill the gap existing today. There are only two bibliographies, both descriptive, that exist on this subject today. Robert Adams Day's Told in

Letters: Epistolary Fiction Before Richardson (1988) is a critical examination, description, and bibliography of primary epistolary works written during the period of 1640 - 1740 and Frank Gees Black's The Epistolary Novel in the Eighteenth Century (1940) picks up where Day's leaves off--it continues the list of primary works from 1740 - 1840. Black's study is a descriptive one that charts the production of epistolary novels as well as the overall production of fiction for the same period, 1740 - 1840. It makes a significant contribution to the understanding of epistolary works in English. The gap left in the listing of primary works extends from 1840 to the present day. As for a bibliography of the criticism relating to this literature, there simply is not one.

Having made this discovery, the next step is to explore the best possibilities in providing the answers to the questions posed above. Generally, the role of research librarians is to provide a bibliography of the literature in question. While that is absolutely essential, we must ask: can a bibliography provide the answers to the questions posed earlier? Can we supplement the bibliography by further studies? If so, just what kind of study would best be suited to answer the kinds of questions we have asked?

One avenue open to the research librarian is that of conducting a descriptive study employing bibliometric techniques. These techniques may be used to provide a

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quantitative description of the documents related to the epistolary form in English literature. This description of the literature "can complement or further more traditional approaches to the study of bibliography and communication" (Nicholas and Ritchie 1978, 9). In the past, library and information science researchers, more specifically, bibliometricians, have focused their energies primarily in the areas of the sciences and social sciences. Studies have been conducted on the broad subject of the humanities, but few studies have been done in specific areas of the humanities. The questions literary researchers ask may be somewhat different than the questions posed by scientists and social scientists, but much of the literature can be quantified in the same way. Further, by providing a descriptive study arrived at by quantified means, can we apply it to other areas of librarianship? Might we learn something about our collections? For example, is there a core of literary critics who specialize in the area of epistolary works? And is there a core of literary journals devoted to the subject? If so, we then may be able to make better judgements about adding certain monograph and journal titles associated with the subject of epistolary works to our collection. We could, then, close gaps in our collection by seeking out retrospective titles that do not already exist in our collection. And when evaluating our collections, we may be able to estimate more closely the strength or weaknesses

by utilizing the information gained by a descriptive study. Possibly there are other benefits as a result of this type of descriptive study.

The specific intention of this research has been to provide, by bibliometric means, a descriptive study of the twentieth-century critical literature of the epistolary form in English literature. The overall intent is to advance librarians' and literary scholars' understanding of the historical characteristics, trends, and make-up of the criticism related to the epistolary form and thereby advance scholarship in this specific area of English literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Literature of Bibliometrics

The literature related to the topic of bibliometrics, and more specifically, the literature of bibliometrics as related to the humanities is narrow in scope. For a general understanding of bibliometrics as it can be applied to any body of literature, or more precisely "related documents" whether in the natural sciences, social sciences, or humanities, Nicholas and Ritchie's Literature and Bibliometrics (1978, 31) is essential. Their discussion of the two broad and very separate categories of bibliometrics: 1) descriptive studies which do precisely that, describe "the characteristics or features of a literature" and 2) behavioral studies which examine "relationships formed

between components of a literature" (Nicholas and Ritchie, 1978, 9) promotes understanding of each category's characteristics. Each type of bibliometric study has its own merits, so the problem is not that one is superior to the other. Instead, each type of study has something to offer and when used in conjunction with each other can enhance the overall understanding of a particular literature. Descriptive studies examine communication and growth patterns and subject and language characteristics, while behavioral studies generally use citation data to reveal usage patterns. Most relevant to the purposes of this research, though, is the descriptive study which requires a comprehensive bibliography. Since providing that bibliography was originally planned, the collecting of data lends itself to providing the information necessary to this descriptive study.

Nicholas and Ritchie's suggestions for features in literature to describe are authors and publishers; the "form of transmission" such as a journal or monograph; the "medium of communication," i.e., article, letter, etc.; the characteristics of the subject and language; "timing and frequency;" length; and "geographical origin" (Nicholas and Ritchie 1978, 10). The guidelines offered in chapter eight of Literature and Bibliometrics (1978) have helped shape both the method of data collection that was used in this study and the display of the data in the form, (i.e., table, chart, or

graph), that best illustrates the features being described. Nicholas and Ritchie discuss methods of recording data on specially designed forms and various means of displaying data that are most conducive to the nature of the characteristics being illustrated. Also, Nicholas and Ritchie's observations of indexing and abstracting services helped this author in scrutinizing the individual citations gathered within a context of data collection.

Complementing the Nicholas and Ritchie work is Lawani's "Bibliometrics: Its Theoretical Foundations, Methods and Applications" (1981). Besides providing a succinct history of early bibliometric studies, Lawani also discusses the importance of the "laws and distributions" used specifically in bibliometrics. More importantly though, the difference between the descriptive studies and behavioral studies discussed by Nicholas and Ritchie are made more clear. Although the study conducted here is descriptive and is preliminary to further research, it will examine citation analyses to understand if the descriptive findings fit into the larger framework of usage by humanities scholars. Lawani also points out that descriptive studies can present problems in selecting periodical titles since the selections made are only as good as the indexing/abstracting service used to collect the data (Lawani 1981, 304). Understanding this contributed toward choosing the indexes used to gather data for this study. The indexing sources chosen for this study

will be discussed later in this paper.

To understand this descriptive study's findings related to journal production and the publishing habits of individual scholars, it is necessary to study one of the earliest works that made a major contribution to the field of bibliometrics, i.e., Bradford's "Sources of Information on Specific Subjects." Bookstein's article, "Explanations of the Bibliometric Laws," (1979) also helps to understand the Bradford law more fully as well as Lotka's law of publishing frequency.

A study done by Chengren Hu (1987) also comprises the literature reviewed for this study. His "Microcomputers in Library and Information Services (1973-1986): A Bibliometric Analysis of Literature Growth" was consulted, since it is a good example of a bibliometric descriptive study. It also provides extremely useful examples of charts and graphs which Hu uses to describe the literature. Growth by year is illustrated as is the number of publications per year during the period indicated in his title. Other areas covered in charts and tables are distribution by format, growth of specific types of documents, language distribution and growth, distribution and growth of the articles in journals, and the most productive journals by number of items and "yearly output" to name but a few. Some of the characteristics of this literature pertain just as readily to the literature of the epistolary form as they do to

microcomputers and thus, served as a guide for what data to discuss and how to display that data.

Another descriptive study consulted for guidance is Efthimiadis's "The Growth of the OPAC Literature" (1990). The literature related specifically to OPACs has invited quantitative study to learn its characteristics Efthimiadis says, unlike most bibliometric research which has been aimed toward broad areas in the sciences and "very narrow areas in the pure scientific fields such as physics, mathematics, etc." (1990, 342). Efthimiadis's study provides further evidence that descriptive studies are being done in areas other than the sciences. Within an outline of knowledge, the OPAC literature is a subset of library science which is in the larger category of social science. Comparatively, the research conducted here follows the same pattern, since it relates to the epistolary form which is an area within the broader discipline of English literature which, in turn, is a specific field of the humanities. The nature of Efthimiadis's topic, a relatively new technology-driven means of information access, has led this study to make projections of the future growth of the literature which he believes will level off. Growth patterns of the literature reveal, during the period of 1970 - 1985, a consistency with the interest generated by OPACs during those years.

Despite some of the negative views held about the ability of bibliometrics to provide librarians with answers

to some very specific problems, Paul Metz (1990) sees opportunities for librarians to tap citation and use studies heretofore unrecognized as potential contributors to the field of library and information science.

The Literature of Usage in the Humanities

As stated earlier, most of the bibliometric studies have been conducted in the areas of science and the social sciences. However, despite the lack of descriptive studies in the humanities, we can still examine citation studies to learn what some of the scholarly usage characteristics are. In the field of literary scholarship, four significant citation analyses have been conducted. Their findings serve as additional examples of Lawani's, and Nicholas and Ritchie's, proclamation that citation studies are appropriate for measurement of relationships. Here we can compare monograph usage with journal articles; determine the amount of foreign language materials that are used in a specific field; and consider the age of the materials used most in a given subject area. We can then compare those findings with the results of descriptive studies to see if there are any possible connections.

First, Heinzkill (1980) analyzed 9,556 footnotes in articles related to the period between the Anglo-Saxon and Victorian eras written in 15 English literary journals published from 1972-1974 to find that literary scholars rely

on monographs more than scholars in other fields do, the majority of items cited are over ten years old, and references to foreign language materials is minimal.

Stern's citation analysis also examined "how researchers use the literature that constitutes literary scholarship" (Stern 1983, 199). The results indicated that monographs were relied on extensively and the age of materials used by literary scholars is still significantly older than those used by scientists. There was some variation in the findings of this study in comparison with Heinzkill's (1980) and may be due, at least in part, to the two-fold nature of Stern's study which focused on three writers and three literary theories. Unlike the writing of criticism related to the authors Stern chose for her study--John Milton, Henry James, and W. H. Auden--literary theory and the criticism related to it have, generally, been written about in the latter part of the twentieth-century. Consider that literary scholars have been writing about Milton for at least two centuries now. This difference in time, Stern suggests accounts for citations being produced when the "movements enjoyed high popularity" as opposed to the primary works of three authors who wrote during periods older than the literary movements and the theories related to them (1983, 208). This conclusion implies that variations in the results may be dependent upon the specific subject of study and thus, makes generalizing about the field as a whole more difficult. For

example, the literature of criticism as it pertains to epistolary works may differ from the criticism of an individual author's work which, alternately, could differ from the criticism of a literary movement. Yet, all three examples fall under the scope of "literary criticism."

Another citation study, that done by Budd (1986), also found that books are more often cited than journal articles, the greatest number of items cited in any age category (of which there were ten) were between 26-50 years old, and English is overwhelmingly cited more often than any other language. Budd's results are based on a total of 7,149 references from 253 sources dealing with the subjects of periods, genres, and authors in American literature.

Cullars' study differed in that he counted repeated citations to a work rather than tallying unique citations as most citation studies do. Cullars' findings shared many of the same characteristics of the other studies; but his observation, in regard to age, that the most cited articles were ones written after World War II is important to the results of the description of the literary criticism related to epistolary works. This is due in part to the fact that interest in the criticism of epistolary fiction appears to be rather high in the latter half of the twentieth-century. This could be as a result of the indexing/abstracting services providing better coverage of journals in the last half of this century, or it could indicate a renewal of

interest in a rather old genre. Cullars' study was based on 30 monographs devoted to literary criticism published from 1976 to 1983.

Although these studies shed light on usage, a descriptive study can reveal much about the growth of the total literature that citation data cannot possibly reveal, and so descriptive studies serve to complement citation studies. This is especially true in the area of format. Heinzkill, Stern, Budd, and Cullars all concluded that books are used more than journals since books are cited more often in English literature. But only a descriptive study will reveal whether or not more books are actually written than journal articles.

Two other sources were most useful in reiterating what some of the citations studies concluded and in contributing to other questions regarding usage. Both articles are reports of reviews of the literature on the information habits of humanities scholars. Christine Fulton's "Humanists as Information Users: A Review of the Literature" (1991) and Sue Stone's "Humanities Scholars: Information Needs and Uses" (1982) discuss such characteristics of humanities scholars as their preference for working alone as opposed to in tandem or in groups as scientists often do (Fulton 1991, 189; Stone 1982, 294); dependence on the primary or creative works rather than secondary sources (Fulton, 191; Stone, 298); use of dated materials since value is not decreased over time as

it is in the sciences (Fulton, 192; Stone, 296); and more prevalent use of foreign language materials than other fields (Fulton, 193).

A study conducted by Robert N. Broadus provides additional evidence supporting the previous findings in the literature reviewed by Fulton and Stone (Broadus 1987). His findings are based on requests made by scholars at the National Humanities Center in North Carolina and thus, encompass some of the issues of use studies in comparison with those of citation studies. Broadus found that the scholars he studied requested monographs more often than journal articles, although they requested more journal articles than the citation studies of Cullars, Budd, and Stern revealed. Also, the age of materials requested were comparable but tend to be newer than those found in citation studies in the area of the humanities. Additionally, foreign language materials were requested less frequently than what other studies have suggested. Broadus's findings are generally in relation to those found in citation studies, but he admits to the study being different from a citation study in that the materials requested at the Center are not necessarily cited in the scholars' work. One additional aspect of this is the fact that the requests made may reflect the content of the collection. And, it must be remembered that the study is based on the field of humanities as a whole, not just the field of literature.

Also consulted was an early descriptive study done by Frank Gees Black (1940) which contributed significantly to the understanding of epistolary works in English. In that study, Black recorded the production of epistolary novels as well as the overall production of other fiction genres for the period of 1740 -1840. It seems appropriate that such information be provided for the criticism of the epistolary form as well as the primary works and the research conducted here has been an effort towards that end.

The literature reviewed here has been not unlike a puzzle with each piece contributing to the overall understanding of the picture of descriptive bibliometric analysis applied to the specific topic of the epistolary form in English literature. The literature described and discussed here contributes to understanding what is to be quantified in order to describe the characteristics of the literary criticism pertaining to the epistolary form, understanding how it differs from citation studies which have tried to measure usage, and understanding other possible applications of descriptive studies.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study is multi-fold. The priorities of this research are:

1) to describe the body of literature related to twentieth-century literary criticism of the

epistolary form in English literature, which includes the following specific characteristics:

a) whether there are authors who consistently write about the epistolary form and whether there are many co-authored works,

b) which forms (i.e., journal articles, monographs, etc.) predominate,

c) pervading publishers of this literature,

d) the languages and countries of publication,

e) the number of items published per year in this subject specific area, and the

f) specific subjects of the criticism,

2) to add to the body of descriptive bibliometric studies which is a slim offering at present, particularly in the area of specific humanities topics, and finally,

3) to examine the bibliographic control available for those wishing to study in the field of epistolary criticism, the overlap in coverage of the major indexing and abstracting services, and the subject headings used in those services.

The description of the literary criticism as it relates to the epistolary form was purposefully limited to the twentieth-century because literary criticism is basically a phenomenon of the twentieth-century and the criticism written about this subject prior to 1900 would be miniscule at best.

The decision to limit the study to only creative epistolary works in the English language was necessary due to time constraints. To include creative epistolary works written in other languages, and there is a substantial body of this literature in French and Italian, would have extended this study at least a year into the future. Since examining the subject of the criticism is part of this research, many of the works of criticism were examined individually; if epistolary works in foreign languages had been added, it would have taken considerably longer to determine the subject and to order materials through interlibrary loan that were not readily available.

METHODOLOGY

Definitions

Since this study aims to systematically examine twentieth-century literary criticism of epistolary works, the brief introduction to the history of the form at the start of this paper illustrates the necessity for limiting the scope of the topic; therefore, any reference made to the phrase "epistolary form" includes only fictional prose in the English language employing a letter or letters which relate a narrative in whole or part. This includes such genres as the short story, the novella, the essay, and of course, the novel. Excluded from this working definition are poetry and non-fiction forms such as biographies or collections of

letters. Literary criticism is that body of literature written about the epistolary form, so excluded, of course, are the primary works themselves. The topic has been narrowed further to include only that criticism written and indexed on the topic during the twentieth-century which will begin with the year 1900 and proceed through the year 1991. Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that the criticism may itself be written about much older works, e.g., an article written in 1978 taking a feminist approach to Fielding's Shamela (1741). The time limitation of the twentieth-century refers only to the date the criticism was written.

In order to characterize the body of literature related to twentieth-century literary criticism of the epistolary form, it is necessary to gather and record data from various sources.

Procedures and Design

The first task was to develop a form (see Appendix A) to record all the information needed to develop a bibliography and to record the additional information required for this study. It was concluded that the data gathered for this study should come from the sources most applicable to the field of literary criticism. As suggested by Lawani, the data gathered is "valid only to the extent to which the abstracting/indexing service selected for analysis is a good representation of publishing in the field of interest" (1981,

304). At this point, it is necessary to acknowledge one of the problems with the major indexes applicable to this field of literary study. All of the H.W. Wilson products, unfortunately, have a bias in reporting mostly works from North America, and second to that, there is a bias towards indexing English language materials. That leaves the MLA International Bibliography and Arts & Humanities Citation Index to fill the void in foreign language materials. Decisions were also based on the applicable indexes available for the years 1900 -1991. The most troublesome period of the twentieth-century for collection of data in the field of literary criticism is 1900 - 1907 when The H.W. Wilson Company issued the first volume of International Index to Periodicals in 1907. The International Index was published due to the fact that so many scholarly publications had come into existence at that time. Some of the major subject fields indexed were archaeology, art, history, language and literature, philosophy, and religion. The subject headings used follow, for the most part, Library of Congress subject headings although they did establish some of their own headings, and there is liberal use of cross references. The philosophy of International Index has remained intact over the years despite two names changes--first, in 1965 with the name changing to Social Sciences & Humanities Index and again, in 1974 when it became known simply as Humanities Index with the social sciences field establishing its own

index. The number of periodicals indexed is now at 345. Besides periodical articles, reviews are indexed as well as bibliographies and some fiction.

In 1978, the Institute for Scientific Information, also known as ISI, published the first volume of Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI). A&HCI offers worldwide coverage of approximately 6,100 journals in virtually every discipline within the humanities. Additionally, it indexes from cover to cover with some exceptions such as advertisements. While this valuable source cannot be overlooked in its value to this study, one problem with it is the fact that there are no subject headings in the "Permuterm" subject index. Entries are based on significant words and phrases in the title of the articles indexed, although A&HCI does offer several "see also" references that assist in getting at the material needed. Obviously, the topic of a paper may not be listed in a title. The only way to overcome this handicap is to supplement it with the use of other indexes for the same period.

Another source used in this project is the MLA International Bibliography. Although it has been in existence since 1921, the volumes for the years preceding 1981 are not usable for this study since subject access was unavailable before 1981. Nevertheless, the MLA is a monumental achievement in bringing together materials from around the world in some 3,024 journals. Besides articles,

it also indexes monographs, proceedings, bibliographies, dictionaries, catalogs, and festschriften devoted to such subjects as world literatures and languages, linguistics, and folklore. Subject access is based on the content of the item indexed, and "see also" references are used liberally.

Since most of the applicable indexes used have a bias toward covering journal articles only, an attempt to overcome this was made by gathering data from Essay and General Literature Index since it indexes not only articles in periodicals, but analytical monographs containing essays. The coverage in this source was available for the entire 1900 - 1991 period. Library of Congress subject headings are supplemented by other headings as needed.

To return to the troublesome period of 1900 - 1907, two sources were used: Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature and Poole's Index to Periodical Literature. The Reader's Guide, being a Wilson product, is similar in philosophy to the Humanities Index. It uses Library of Congress subject headings, but its focus is on indexing materials that are to be found in more popular works such as Ladies' Home Journal, Harper's, and Atlantic Monthly. For this reason, Poole's Index was used to supplement this time period since its focus is based more on scholarly publications such as Journal of Political Economy, Yale Review, and American Historical Review.

A total of seven sources, or eight if counting the name

changes of International Index, were used as follows:

Essay & General Literature Index for the period of 1900-1991
Poole's Index and Reader's Guide for the period of 1900-1907
International Index for the period of 1907-1965
Social Sciences & Humanities Index the period of 1965-1974
Humanities Index for the period of 1974-1991
Arts & Humanities Citation Index for the period of 1978-1991
MLA International Bibliography for the period of 1981-1991

The characteristics of the body of literature related to literary criticism of epistolary works in the English language that were recorded are:

1) Author
2) Authorship, i.e., whether single or co-authors
3) Subject heading(s) or keywords used
4) Format, i.e., monograph, journal article, proceeding, etc.
5) Title
6) Language
7) Country of publication
8) Year of publication
9) Publisher
10) Subject

This last characteristic, subject, was recorded under

one of four different possible categories assigned as follows: theory, history, specific work(s), or the form. The third category above, subject heading, differs from the last category, subject, in specificity. The subject heading is usually "epistolary" or "letters" or some such term, but the actual subject relates to the content of the item indexed. More specifically, the subject category was assigned by information provided in the title, the subject heading(s), examination of the actual item when possible, information given in abstracts provided by the MLA, and/or the associated citation information used in A&HCI. "Theory" was assigned as a subject when the work indexed dealt with a way of regarding the work such as a deconstructionist reading as in the article entitled "Lacan and Derrida on The Purloined Letter." In this case, two literary theoreticians are providing an alternative reading to Edgar Allen Poe's story. The term "History" was assigned as a subject when a work was clearly identified as an offering of epistolary works of a period or a linear study. Two fine examples of this are in a dissertation entitled Dear Sir or Madam: The Epistolary Novel in Britain in the Nineteenth Century and an article in the Journal of American Culture entitled "The Letter and the Fiction Reading Public in Antebellum America." "Specific work(s)" was assigned as a subject heading to those indexed items that were clearly about individual creative epistolary works as found in such articles as "Printed Letters in

Ulysses" and "The Intrusive Voice: Telegrams in The House of Mirth and The Age of Innocence." "Form" was assigned as a subject to works that did not discuss specific epistolary works, but instead concentrated on the use of the epistolary form in literature such as in the article "Motifs in Epistolary Fiction-An Analysis of a Narrative Subgenre." These categories were subjectively assigned; but to clarify, where there were possibly two subjects such as theory and specific works, subject was assigned based on which part of the subject seemed to predominate. For example, a work emphasizing theory may use examples from specific works to support its argument, but it is basically theory rather than a comparison of works.

One other limitation of this study was clear at the beginning of the data collection process. The fact that an epistolary work could be written about on the basis of its being a psychological work, or as a study of an author, or the basis for a theoretical concept may eliminate its being listed in any given index under "epistolary" or any other related heading. One needs only to examine a recent copy of the MLA International Bibliography to notice that Alice Walker is listed as an author and under her name are the works she has written, one of which is The Color Purple. However, The Color Purple, despite its being an epistolary work may not be discussed in that light. It may, instead, be discussed as a psychological work, it may be discussed in

terms of a feminist reading or as a mirror of minorities' subjugation--that is, it may not have been discussed as an epistolary novel. This could be viewed as a limitation of this study since it is fairly well acknowledged that browsing is a very popular means of gaining information in the field of the humanities (Stone 1982, 295). A literary scholar doing research on The Color Purple as an epistolary novel may very well begin with a search under "Walker, Alice." The scholar may or may not find that item listed under the heading "epistolary fiction." If the item is not listed under "epistolary fiction," it does not necessarily mean that the researcher will refrain from choosing the listing under "Walker, Alice--The Color Purple". It may even be that the researcher will end up citing such material since it may have some other quality that struck the researcher as being vital to his or her understanding of the work. The fact that it is not listed under "epistolary fiction" only means that the indexer did not deem the item to be about the epistolary nature of The Color Purple. On the other hand, the item may show up under both the "epistolary fiction" heading and "Walker, Alice--The Color Purple." Since no study is without its limitations, it was necessary to draw the line at some point and in that regard, the indexes' subject headings have provided that point.

The subject headings themselves were recorded as mentioned earlier, and they have provided an interesting

history of the vocabulary used in retrieving materials on the subject of epistolary works and will be discussed specifically later. Generally though, the terms searched were "Letters," "Letters in literature," and always "Epistolary," although that term was very late in coming to the indexes. By looking under "Fiction" and "Literature" the researcher is led to other terms by see also references. When looking under the term "Epistle," for instance, there may be a cross reference to "Epistolary novel" or "Letters." Another example is the general term "Letters" which may lead to "Business letter" and/or "Love letter." The rule in the indexes seems to be to add cross references only when materials are available under specific headings. If there are not articles about love letters in 1984, then it is unnecessary for the indexers to take up additional room by listing the term "Love letters."

Achieving the most accurate description of this literature was accomplished by recording the information in each of the nine categories listed above for each individual item found in each yearly index that had a pertinent listing or listings. Care was taken to record which items were duplicates of each other so that the item would not be counted twice.

RESULTS

The data collected and presented here has specifically

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attempted to provide a picture of a number of characteristics discussed earlier.

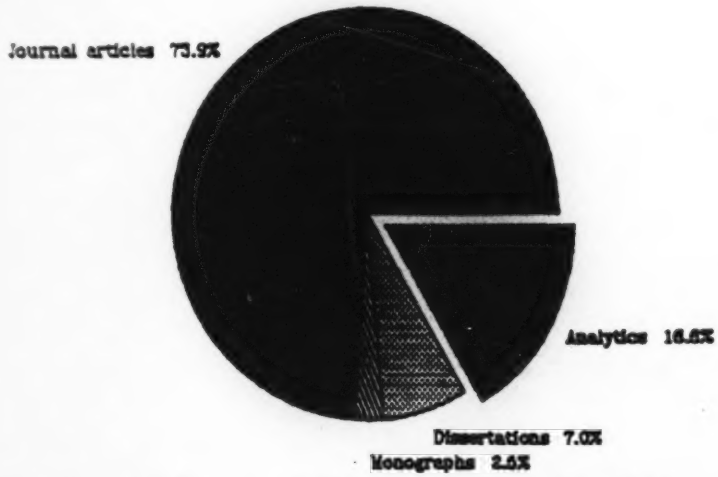
The first is authorship. For the period of 1900 - 1991, there were 157 items identified by the indexes listed earlier. Those 157 items were authored by a total of 150 authors. The difference of seven is accounted for by the fact that two individual authors wrote four items each and three individual authors wrote two items each. Only two articles had dual authorship. The results here are consistent with use studies' findings that humanities scholars tend to work alone, since the "individual viewpoint is still considered as part of the overall contribution to knowledge" in the humanities field (Stone 1982, 294). Also, it is consistent but only in the most general way, with Lotka's law which was based on scientists' publishing habits. That law states most authors contribute quite infrequently, while only a few authors publish "disproportionately frequently" (Bookstein 1979, 153). A total of five authors does not constitute a core of writers of criticism pertaining to the epistolary form. The two authors that wrote four items each are Shari Benstock, a Joycean scholar whose three articles and one analytic chapter were devoted to letters in Finnegan's Wake and Ulysses, and Julia L. Epstein, a feminist scholar whose two articles and two analytic chapters focused on women writers' use of the epistolary form. The three literary critics who wrote two items each were Linda S. Kauffman,

David Krause, and Patricia Meyer Spacks. Kauffman's emphasis has been on the form as a whole and her major contribution has been a monograph entitled Discourse of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions which has received considerable attention within the community of literary scholars studying this form. David Krause's articles have focused on the letters in William Faulkner's work and Patricia Meyer Spacks has contributed feminist readings of epistolary works in her articles. Since the epistolary form is a subset of genres, it may be assumed that there would not be a large number of critics writing in such a limited area. Instead, it may be assumed that critics writing about a wider area such as a particular author or work may actually produce more writing than one working in a narrow area such as the epistolary form.

The types of format found in this study numbered four: journal articles, which predominated; followed by analytic works; dissertations; and monographs which had the lowest count. The results can be seen in Figure 1. Analytic works were considered as individual chapters contributed to a monograph or proceeding unlike a monograph that has only one author and one subject. There was one exception to this definition of an analytic work and that is a work by one author which was a collection of essays pertaining to a variety of literary subjects, and only one essay was devoted to the subject of epistolary works. The difference was that

it appeared to be a monograph since it had only one author, but upon examination it really was an analytic work that just happened to have only one author.

The citation studies of Heinzkill (1980), Stern (1983), Budd (1986), and Cullars (1985) all found that books were the primary format cited in literary scholarship. However, before pronouncing the findings of this descriptive study as atypical, since journal articles make up the largest portion of format type, consider Heinzkill's observation that although books are cited more often, the primary means of communication within the field of literary studies is still the journal article (1980, 354). So, one way to assimilate these findings is to suggest that although scholars rely heavily on creative works and monographs of criticism as evidenced in their citation patterns, the literary journals provide a means of scholarly but less formal way of conversing.



Percentage of Types of Publication

29

Publishers of monographs and titles of journals were recorded in an effort to discover whether the specific subject of epistolary fiction has representatives in the publishing industry. There were a total of 30 monograph and analytic publishers and only one, Northeastern University Press, has published four books. The next closest was the University Press of Mississippi with two titles. All the other 28 published only one item each. As for the journal publications, there were a total of 84 titles producing 116 articles. The breakdowns in Figure 2 show the relationships of journals to articles. Fourteen journals, or 17% are responsible for one-third, or 39 articles; the second one-third of the articles are published by 38% of the journals; and the last one-third of the articles are published by 45% of the journal publishers.

Journals Responsible for Output

Figure 2

30

Rather than suggest that the findings as illustrated in Figure 2 fit Bradford's law exactly, it is still possible to suggest that the findings here fit, in the most general of ways, to the specifics of Bradford's law which was concerned with the number of journals of a particular discipline. After all, epistolary fiction is but a subgenre of literature and has no core of journals. Bradford's research suggests that "journal productivity follows a law of diminishing returns, with larger and larger numbers of journals being needed to produce the same number of articles" (Bookstein 1979, 152-153). This makes collecting in a discipline difficult (as well as in a subdiscipline), since "it follows that the only way to glean all the articles....would be to scrutinize continually several thousands of journals, the bulk of which would yield only occasional references or none at all" (Bradford 1976, 102).

Another characteristic of this literature that was examined was that of language. In Robert Broadus' survey of requests at the National Humanities Center, he found that the overwhelming majority of requests were for materials in the English language. Those materials comprised 83% of the requests from the overall group he surveyed (Broadus 1987, 127). When he studied the requests made by members of university departments of English only, he found the number was even higher, 94.4%, which he observed was not very different from the findings in Heinzkill's citation study

which put English language materials used in literary studies at 91% (Broadus 1987, 127).

The tally of English language materials in the field of epistolary fiction is not different. Out of the 157 items collected, 149 or 95% were in English, six items were in French, one in German, and one in Russian. Keep in mind that the language discussed here is in relation to the criticism and not the epistolary works themselves. As indicated in Table 1, the country of publication does not necessarily translate into the language of publication. For instance, of the four items published in France, only one was in French. The reason, of course, is that English is the primary language used in many foreign journals.

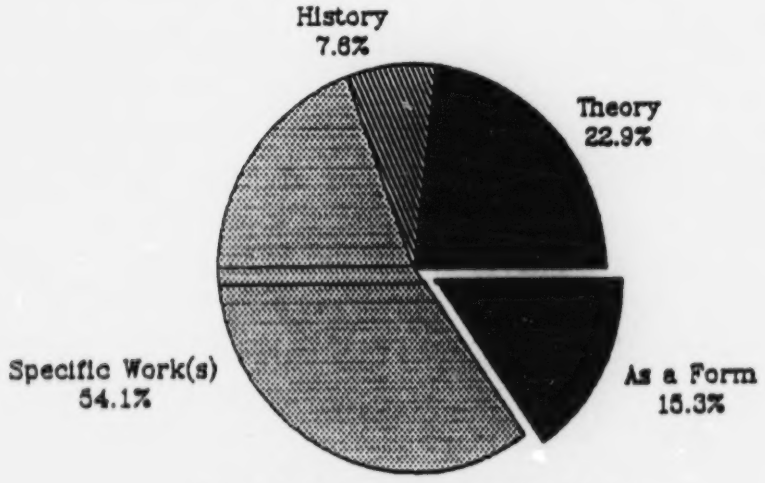
Table 1

COUNTRY OF PUBLICATION

Country	Total
United States	129
Canada	9
Great Britain	7
Germany	4
France	4
Sweden	1
Denmark	1
U.S.S.R.	1
India	1
Total	157

Bibliometric studies do not usually discuss content of the items cited or collected, but in an effort to provide a description of the critical literature related to epistolary

works, the subject of the 157 items collected was examined. Bibliographers or literary scholars who conduct research in this narrow field of literary criticism might find an overall view of the approaches taken to the subject of epistolary works useful. The four categories of subject, which were defined earlier, are theory, history, specific work(s), and the epistolary form as a genre or a technique in narrative. The results in Figure 3 reveal that over half of the 157 items are devoted to specific works. The remaining half, approximately, is divided closely between theory and form with the smallest percentage being histories of the form.



Subjects of the Criticism

Figure 3

The overall growth pattern of literary criticism of epistolary fiction can be seen in Figure 4. The years 1900 -

33

1965 are not included in Figure 4 because there were no significant contributions. For those 66 years, a total of 7 items were indexed as follows: once in 1906, once in 1923, once in 1928, twice in 1930, and once each in 1935 and 1939. Figure 4 tells a somewhat different story. The period of 1966 - 1991 began quietly with only a few items gathered for the beginning of that 26 year period. The first major increase was in 1977 when the amount doubled over the highest years, which of course, amounted only to four items--nevertheless, it was a doubling of the highest amount ever recorded. In 1981 and 1982 the rise continued, and this probably can be accounted for by the fact that the MLA International Bibliography began subject coverage in 1981. However, there was a decline in 1983. After that, the literary criticism for epistolary works increased substantially over the three year period of 1984 -1986. As a matter of record, there were four overlapping indexes from the year 1981 - 1991 which could account, at least partially, for some of the increase. The offerings for the year 1987 were lowered to the previous 1982 figures. This was followed by another three year upward surge from 1988 -1990 and the last year recorded, 1991, showed a leveling off. A brief review of Figure 4 shows three major growth periods, and each one is larger than its predecessor.

The specific breakdown by format per year is recorded in Figure 5. The period 1900 - 1965, which again was not

recorded graphically because of the lack of entries, can be summed up as follows: three journal articles and four analytical works made up the entire seven items recorded by the indexes for that 66 year period. Beginning in 1966 though, it was not surprising that journal articles, since they make up over 73% of the entire 157 items, reflect the overall growth pattern of three growth surges beginning in 1981.

The second largest percentage in the types of publication was registered in the analytics category. In Figure 5 it is marked as Series C. That category has held true to the three growth surges also, but in lesser number and for fewer years. The most significant years of production for analytic works were 1980, 1985 and 1989 and parallel the overall growth pattern.

While the number of dissertations is not significant in quantity, the years they are recorded in are important. Indicated as Series B in Figure 5, it is easily noted that all were produced after 1986, and therefore contribute to the substantial growth of this literature in the last surge recorded.

As for the monographs, only four were counted and were produced in 1982, 1983, 1984, with the last counted in 1988. The monographs are marked as Series D in Figure 5.

Growth of the Literature

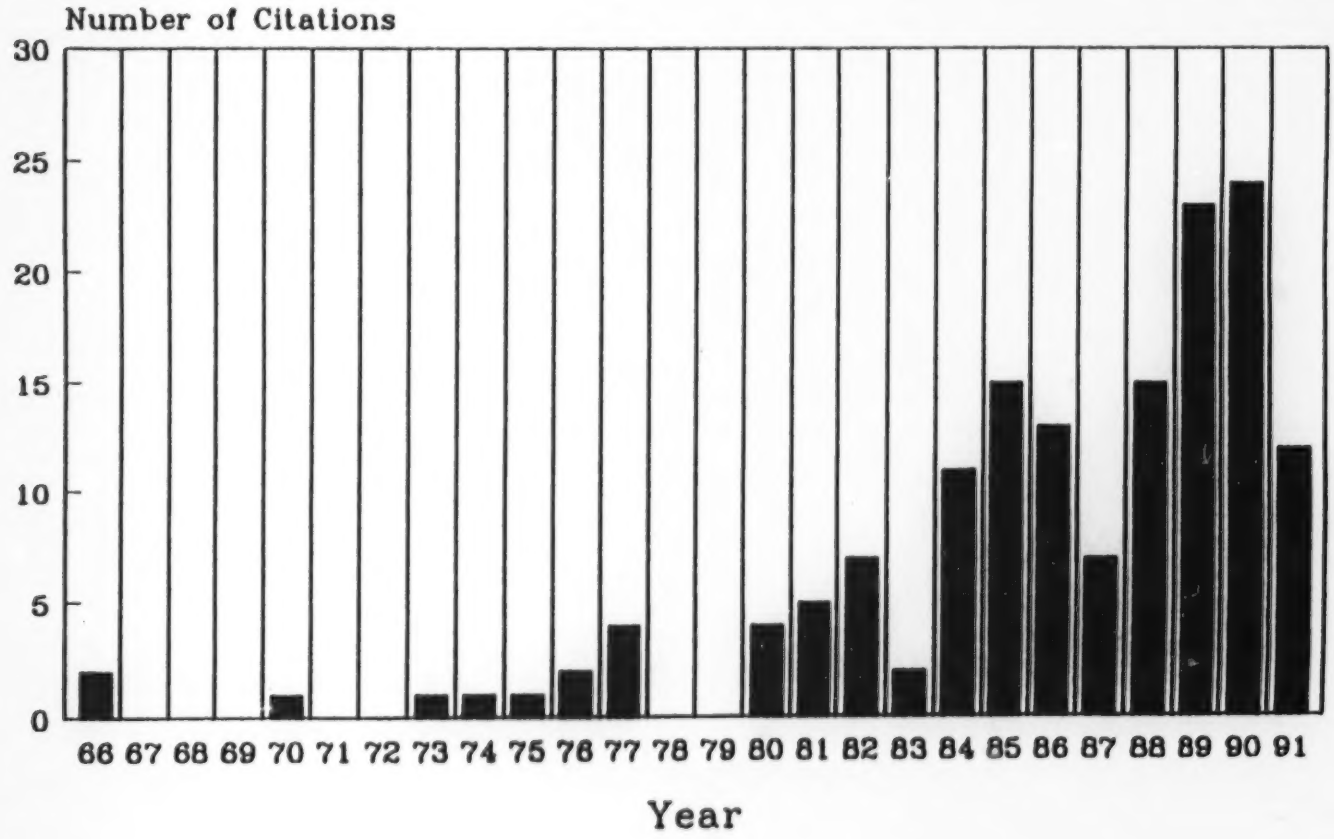
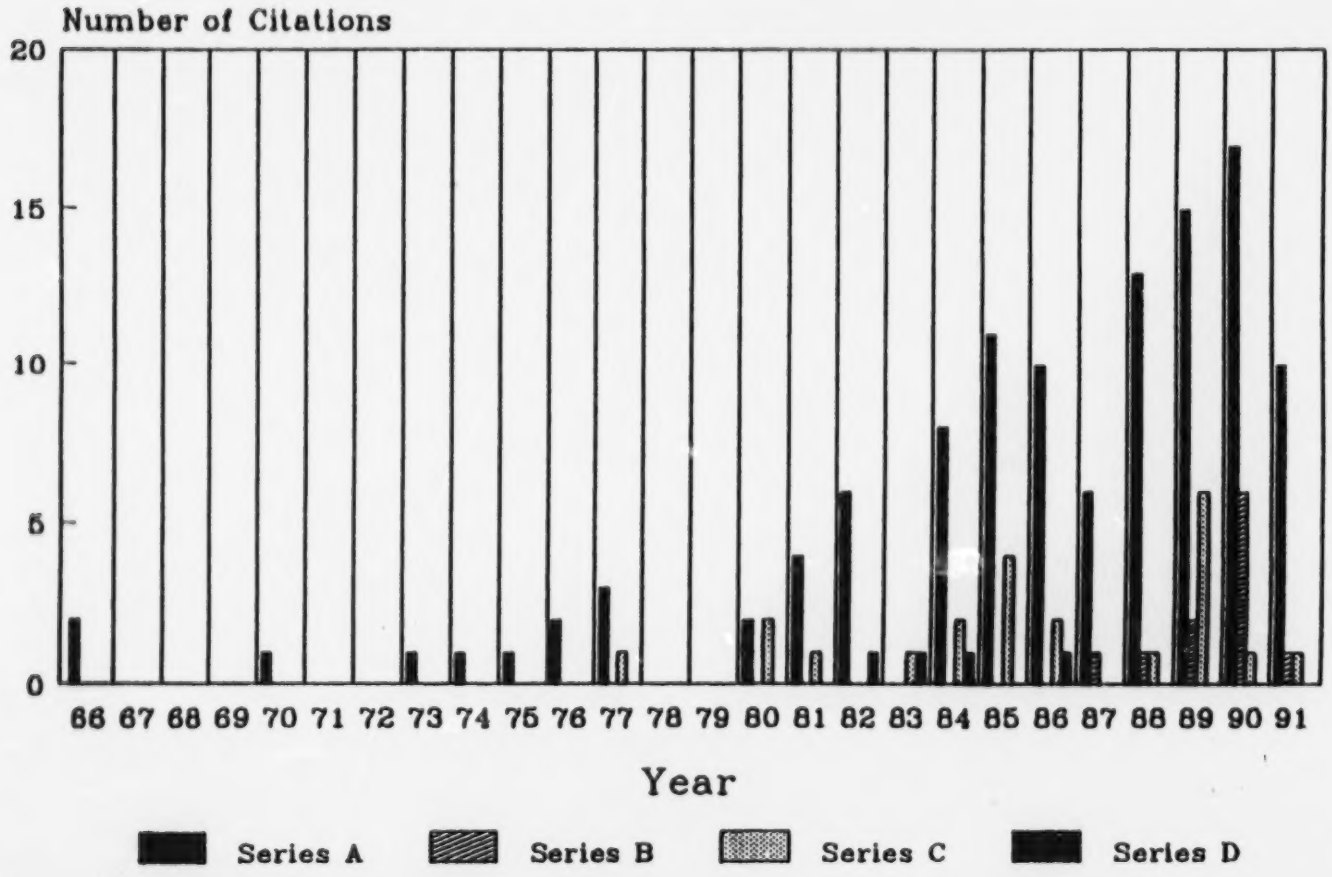


Figure 4

Publication Type by Year



A=Journal Articles B=Dissertations C=Analytics D=Monographs

Figure 5

THE INDEXES

The indexes used for this study were discussed previously, but in light of the figures representing growth patterns of this literature it may be useful to reiterate at this point that a total of eight indexes were used for the 92 year period. Table 2 reveals that there was a very limited amount of overlap of indexing from 1900 - 1980. The most important overlap is for the period of 1981 - 1991 when four indexes overlap; and more importantly, this is the greatest period of growth. Thus, the importance of recording duplicates is evident as mentioned previously--each item was counted only once. Here is evidence that we should question the validity of our data for those years that are scarce of recorded items. "The accuracy of data depends largely upon the effectiveness of bibliographic control," and increases in the number of items recorded could provide an appearance of growth (Nicholas & Ritchie 1978, 97).

Table 2
OVERLAPPING INDEXES

| | | |

It is obvious that today's indexing/abstracting services are significantly better at recording, collecting, and publishing data than in previous years. However, some of the indexes have proven to be problematic in other areas. The H. W. Wilson indexes, which number five in this study with Reader's Guide, International Index, Social Science & Humanities Index, Humanities Index, and Essay and General Literature Index, have a clear bias in recording items from English language sources. The other major problem is the fact that most of the indexes record items from scholarly journals more than any other format. Therefore, the questions must be posed: Is such a study as the one conducted here biased towards English language materials? And moreover, could there be a bias in the number of journal articles recorded in this project? Both Figure 1 (the Percentage of Types of Publication) and Table 1 (Country of Publication) indicate this as a very real possibility. We already know that the scarcity of items prior to 1966 is probably due to the scarcity of indexes; so, is the surge in the literary criticism of epistolary fiction after 1981 related to the fact that the MLA International Bibliography began providing subject access in 1981? It is also necessary to acknowledge that this study was confined to the creative epistolary works written in the English language. Perhaps if this study had been titled "Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism of the Epistolary Form in World Literature" as

opposed to being limited to English literature, then perhaps we could make harsher judgements especially in regards to language and country of publication. But, on the practical side, as bibliographers, we can only wring our hands quietly behind our backs as we grin and bear the fact that today we were able to find so many more relevant items to our research than in days past.

Another problem area in the index arena is that of duplication. In Figure 6 is recorded the number of relevant items that came out of the four indexes that overlap for the period of 1981 - 1991. The total number includes duplicates which total 26. Bradford complained in 1934 about the indexing duplication in the field of science and technology. His research found that 750,000 articles were indexed each year which was the same amount published each year, but because of duplication only 250,000 were actually indexed which left 500,000 articles less accessible (Bradford 1934, 95). This problem may be more prevalent in the sciences, and it may not be as of great concern in 1991 as in 1934; however, it is still another element in the collection and analysis of data that must be considered.

The individual data collection forms that were marked as duplicates reveal that the 26 duplicated items were present in Humanities Index and MLA more than the other two indexes. Arts & Humanities Citation Index reported some of the same items, but Essay and General Literature Index did not.

Figure 6 indicates agreement in that MLA (Series C) followed by Humanities Index (Series A) were the two largest providers of literary criticism related to epistolary literature.

Items by Index 1981–1991

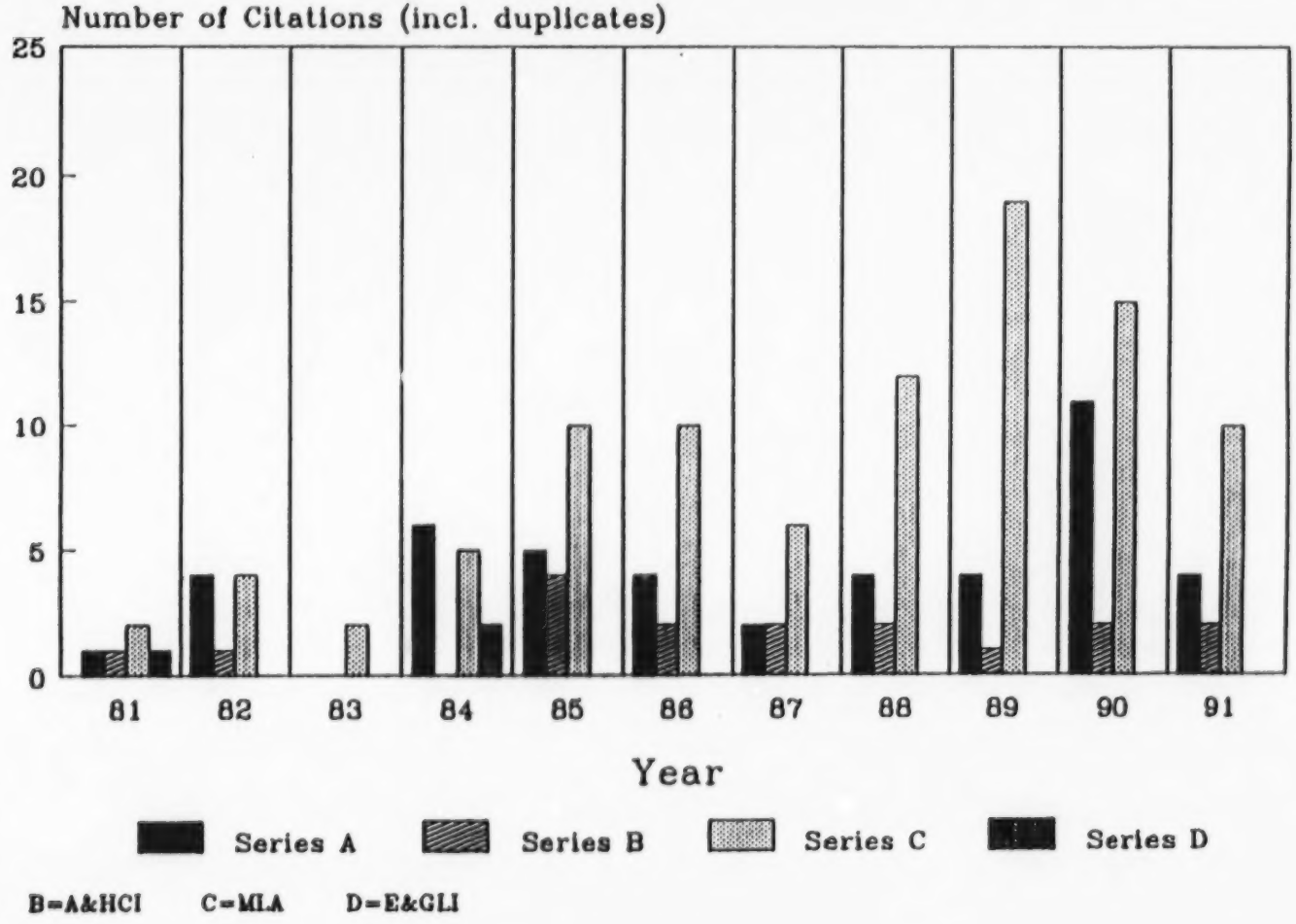


Figure 6

SUBJECT HEADINGS

Over the years of 1900 - 1991, the indexes have used a variety of terms to express the subject of epistolary works. Some have been very specific and some quite general. The early years gave us terms such as "Letter writing," "English letters," and just simply "Letters." Beginning in 1966, the term "Fiction technique" surfaced once as did "Letter writing in literature" in 1970. In 1977, "Epistolary fiction" came in to vogue and is still used today, although it appears that "Epistolary novel" is more widely used. Of course, this could account for the large number of items that helped to make up the subject category of "Specific work(s)" which was discussed previously. However, the largest number of items received the subject heading "Letters." The first appearance of "Letters" in the items collected appeared in 1930; it appeared again in 1935, 1939 and 1966. The term was not seen for eighteen years until, in 1984 it surfaced again and has been consistently in the indexes since that time. One observation made during the course of collecting relevant items for this research was the fact that the indexers appear to have struggled with the terms "Letters" and "Letters in literature." These two terms are generally used when the indexer is attempting to describe criticism written about the subgenre or individual letters that are contained in drama or fictional works. Although these terms are still popular, there now appears to be a trend towards being even more

specific with "Genres--Form" used once in 1989 and "Epistolary technique," used once in 1990, and "Love letters" used five times from 1985 - 1991. Table 3 indicates the terms, and the total number of times used, that have been recorded in the course of this study. The number includes duplicates.

Table 3

Term Used	Number of Times Used
Letter writing	3
English letters	2
Epistolary novel	31
Epistolary fiction	27
Letters	41
Letters in literature	34
Epistolary form	14
Epistolary short story	1
Love letters	5
Letter writing in literature	1
Fiction technique	1
Epistolary technique	1
Genres--Form	1

There was an effort made to encompass as many terms as possible in locating the literary criticism of epistolary works. The potential vocabulary included the terms above as well as the very general terms "American literature," "American fiction," "English literature," "English fiction" "Prose," and "Rhetoric" which all proved to be fruitless for two reasons. As mentioned earlier, the first reason is the fact that just because an epistolary novel may appear under "English literature" does not necessarily mean that it is discussed in terms of its "epistolariness"; and second, the

size of most indexes' general sections precludes searching item by item since the entries number in the thousands, and subcategories such as "Theory" do not necessarily help the searcher locate relevant items. The two items that were found under the subject heading "English letters" were recorded in the early years of 1923 and 1928 when the size of the section labeled "English letters" was still of a size that could be scanned. Other specific search terms that proved useless also were: "Correspondence," although this was a popular term for sometime, it usually referred to biographical works or letters written and exchanged by literary figures; "Literary style," and "Literary form."

These terms were all searchable in the indexes except for Arts & Humanities Citation Index. A researcher using this source will not necessarily find materials related to the subject of interest since the terms used are based on words and phrases in the title. The problem, of course, is that not all titles reflect their subject as in a 1990 article in Modern Language Quarterly entitled "Arts of Seduction and the Rhetoric of Clarissa" or in the 1989 article "The Anxiety of Influence: Family and Class (Dis)order in Pamela: or Virtue Rewarded" in Studies in English Literature. Neither of these examples had the word "epistolary" or "letter" in the title, which even if either term were present is still no guarantee that the subject is epistolary in nature.

OTHER SOURCES

After considering the comparative value of the indexes and the subject headings used, our attention can turn to a brief evaluation of the relevant items collected from the indexes. In order to do this, four monographs devoted to epistolary works, one of which is an analytical work, were chosen and reviewed to see if the materials uncovered in this study were cited. This was done in an effort to check whether or not the items recorded in this study are indeed materials that are used by scholars writing in this limited field of literary criticism. In chronological order, the first book chosen was Godfrey Frank Singer's The Epistolary Novel: Its Origin, Development, Decline, and Residuary Influence (1933), the second was Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form (1982) by Janet Altman Gurkin, the next was Discourse of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions (1986) by Linda Kauffman, and last, the analytic entitled Writing the Female Voice: Essays on Epistolary Literature (1989). These works were chosen based on the attention each has received within this field of study. All of these works were found in the indexes during the course of this study with the exception of Singer's The Epistolary Novel, which is a much older work.

It was not surprising that few of the items collected in this study were found in the monographs chosen. The reason is that most of the monographs were published prior, i.e.,

before 1987, to the last upsurge of literary criticism of this subgenre. Another reason is that study in this field lends itself to a number of other areas. For example, there were several works found in these four monographs that were related to history, sociology, and the rhetoric of correspondence as indicated in the following titles respectively, The Annual Register: or, a View of History, Politics and literature (n.d.), "Reading Writing, and Publishing in Eighteenth-Century France: A Case Study in the Sociology of Literature" in Daedalus (1971), and "Richardson's Correspondence: The Personal Letter as Private Experience" in The Familiar Letter in the Eighteenth Century (1966).

Other interesting characteristics found in these other monographs include the format. We know from other studies that humanities scholars use primary sources, in this case the original works that the criticism is written about, more than scholars in other areas (Fulton 1991, 190-191). Out of roughly 170 bibliographic references in the four monographs consulted, 36 were to original works and 80 were to monographs including analytical works. The findings in the studies of Cullars, Budd, Stern, and Heinzkill are in agreement with this very unsystematic and uneven selection of references to compare to the items uncovered in the data collection process of this study. Surprisingly though, there were actually more references made to journals, 47, than the

original works, 36. Since journal articles have received more use since World War II (Cullars 1985, 521), the trend may be toward seeing more journal references made in the future. One possible reason for this trend could be that humanities scholars may have begun using their journals to converse with each other moreso than in the past.

The age of these materials was not surprising either. The journal references, of course, made the overall age of items younger than studies of the past. However, the dates of the original works, many of which were in the late seventeenth-century, move the overall age to an older category. Although humanities scholars have been slow to answer the call from technology-driven sources (Stone 1982, 299-300), there will undoubtedly come a time when these systems will be more humanities-user-friendly, and this will drive the age of items, perhaps, into a much younger category than in the past. Humanities scholars' reluctance to use technology-driven information systems could also be attributed to the problems in coverage of the older iters. Most CD-ROM indexing sources such as MLA have found retrospective conversion of its print sources to be almost impossible. However, a reliance on the primary works in the field of the humanities will probably always be higher than in other disciplines. Budd's citation analysis revealed that "authors of books make the greatest use of older materials" and almost 30% of the references in these books are to

materials over 50 years old (1986, 200). Additionally, Budd found that authors of journal articles cite books to a lesser degree, although older materials still make up a significant amount of the references (1985, 202).

ALTERNATIVE BENEFITS OF DESCRIPTIVE STUDIES

Heinzkill, in an article devoted to retrospective collection development in the area of literature points out that "selective retrospective bibliographies," which he defines as any bibliography that is not produced serially (1987, 56) are some of the best tools that can be used in collection building. It may also be that the data collected in this descriptive study, which will contribute in part to a selective bibliography of the literary criticism of epistolary works, may have value in the area of collection development. Further, if this study advances our understanding of the nature of the literature of the epistolary form then, perhaps, we can make evaluative judgements concerning our collection of these materials. Heinzkill suggests that selective bibliographies such as the one being compiled from the data collected for this study, can be used in "compiling a desiderata file," recording annotations that can be referred to when dealing with rare book dealers, and of course, for comparing with "book dealer catalogs to identify wanted titles" (1987, 61-2). The bibliographies, as well as the descriptive study, can be used

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to facilitate other collection development techniques such as his creative idea to aid selection by keeping track of the ever-changing list of "canonized authors" (Heinzkill 1987, 62).

The characteristics of format and age were discussed earlier in regard to usage and so, becomes important to collection developers as well as bibliographers. As Heinzkill has stated, format, in the area of literature, shows a reliance on monographs rather than journals;" the make-up or "mix" of materials may encompass manuscripts, journals, reference materials, and original works; and he refers to his own citation study that found "70 percent of all material cited was over ten years old" (Heinzkill 1987, 58). How can knowing this assist the literature collection developer? Is understanding these traits really beneficial? Theoretically, the answer is a spirited "Yes." But practically, we need, perhaps, to consult Danny P. Wallace's "A Solution in Search of a Problem: Bibliometrics & Libraries" for an argument to Heinzkill's opinion. Wallace points out that Bradford's work, as discussed in this paper earlier, tells us that it takes more and more journals to produce fewer and fewer relevant materials. We know that the bibliographer has listed all the journal titles needed to round out a collection, say, in the field of epistolary fiction. So, how do we go about practically collecting those journals that have been identified as useful to the

study of epistolary fiction? Wallace asks 1) What would be the cost to collect these journals? 2) How many of these journals would be available, especially in view of the fact that we know humanities scholars do not depend on yesterday's scholarly news, but may instead cite an article from fifty years ago? and 3) Can we justify the expense and time of providing these materials for what may receive infrequent use? (Wallace 1987, 43). After all, a faculty member who is adding a graduate level seminar to the English department's curriculum may abandon the course within one or two years, or the course may resurface once in every ten years.

Wallace continues his argument by citing the fact that so many bibliometric studies have been done and the "common denominator of all these [studies] is that....none of them includes any confirmation that the results were actually employed in collection management either in the environment in which the study was conducted or in some other setting" (Wallace 1987, 43-44). He believes the value of bibliometric studies lies in the framework of the "sociology of scholarship" but "not as a means for improving collections of bibliographic items" (Wallace 1987, 47). The findings of the descriptive study of literary criticism as it pertains to the epistolary form confirms Wallace's view of the impracticability in its application to collection development in this subject specific area. After all, there was no core of journal titles found that were applicable nor was there

even a core of literary critics who have written prolifically about this subject. The materials identified as appropriate to this subgenre during the course of this study, in many cases, would already be owned by the library or would be easily obtainable through.interlibrary loan.

Yet another view acknowledges the pessimistic view of the Bradford distribution as discussed by Wallace, but Paul Metz points out "optimists may note that a relatively small investment will cover an encouraging percentage of the relevant literature" (Metz 1990, 151). Metz suggests that the merits of citation analyses and use studies lie in the future when they can "complement more traditional methods of improving search procedures and vocabularies by showing the relatedness of subjects and documents from the user's point of view" (Metz 1987, 160).

FURTHER STUDY

For the very reason Metz cites, the next step is uncovering the mysteries of epistolary works and their relatedness. The way to achieve this, of course, is by conducting a citation analysis. A citation study, in combination with a descriptive study, would provide both a descriptive and behavioral view of this literature. Also, by following up and adding to the existing data of this present study, long term patterns may be seen, and perhaps projections made for the future of epistolary works and the

scholarly communication regarding them. The very fact that the letter is a dying art form suggests that humanities scholars may either be looking at this area with renewed interest or abandoning it altogether. The fact that the gathering of materials to produce a bibliography on this subject is well under way is also reason enough to have a continual update done. The more comprehensive the bibliography related to this subject specific area of literature, the more accurate this description will be.

SUMMARY

Since the beneficiaries of this study are literary scholars working in the subject specific area of epistolary fiction, the following summary is provided as an overview of the findings.

The main contributors to the literary criticism written in the field of epistolary fiction have been single authors. Out of the 157 items collected, only two were co-authored works, and very few of the authors contributed more than one item. The journal article is the primary means of communication in this field. There appears to be only one publisher, Northeastern University Press, interested in the literature of this subgenre. However, Northeastern University Press has only published four books. There does not appear to be any major journal devoted to the subject, and there are only a few journals that have published the

criticism related to epistolary works consistently. The journal ELH published five articles, and the James Joyce Quarterly and Studies in English Literature each published four articles. Most of the criticism has been written in English even if it was published in a foreign country. This may be due in large part to the study being limited to epistolary fiction written in English. We could probably expect to find the same results if we had limited the study to French epistolary novels of which there are many and which are written about, to a considerable degree, by French literary scholars. The subject of most of the criticism appears to be about specific works although theory and form have received considerable attention. The first appearance of this criticism in the indexes searched was in 1906, but it was not until after 1980 that there were many entries in the indexes. This does not necessarily mean there was a lack of interest in the subject. If indexing is any reflection of interest, it does appear that there has been more interest in the past few years than in years prior to 1988. Subject headings used most often and most consistently over the twentieth-century have been "Letters" and "Letters in literature." Indexers do seem to be grappling with assigning more specific terms than have been seen in the past few years.

Bibliographers, while gathering specific titles, can readily place that information onto a form similar to that

used in this study. What emerges is a holistic rather than a piecemeal view of the past scholarship. The literary scholar is able to discover the significant contributors to the literature with whom they may wish to establish contact. Scholars may also be able to establish which publishers may be interested in receiving submissions on the subject of interest. And knowing the predominant languages used in the subject area of interest can be important to the literary researcher who may find the need to develop foreign language skills if planning on pursuing the subject further. Regardless of the specific area which a bibliographer is collecting titles in, the data can be put into a form that gives researchers more than just titles--researchers will have a clear picture of the communication characteristics and may perhaps learn something that would not have revealed itself as readily in the standard bibliographic form.

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INDEX: _____ YEAR

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AUTHOR(S) NAME(S): _____

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AUTHOR(S) ROLE: _____

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